



MITCHELL E. DANIELS, Jr., Governor
STATE OF INDIANA

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY JOSEPH E. WAINSCOTT JR., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Indiana Department of Homeland Security
Indiana Government Center South
302 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-3980*

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Fireworks Caution Urged as New Year's Eve Approaches

Be Aware of State Fireworks Laws

INDIANAPOLIS – New Year's Eve is the second most common holiday for fireworks. The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) Fire & Building Safety division urges Hoosier to play it safe when using fireworks to ring in the new year.

“When handled by professionals, a fireworks show may look easy, but each year they cause injury, death and property damage because of misuse and accidents,” said Jim Greeson, State Fire Marshal.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), in 2006 an estimated 9,200 people were injured by fireworks in the United States and had to be treated in a hospital emergency room.

“Hoosiers need to remember that restrictions are in place regarding the use of fireworks, as well as the possible penalties for violators,” Greeson added. “We want to stress the personal responsibility of each fireworks consumer. Obey our laws, follow directions for safe use and most importantly, apply common sense.”

Fireworks law provisions:

- Fireworks may be used only on the user's property; or on the property of someone who has consented to the use of fireworks; or at a special discharge location.
- Fireworks can be purchased only by persons 18 years of age or older and children may possess or use any kind of firework only when an adult is present.
- Penalties for violating the fireworks law can range from a Class A misdemeanor up to a Class C felony in the case of the reckless or intentional use of fireworks that results in a person's death.
- On Memorial Day, the 4th of July, Labor Day and New Year's Eve, fireworks may be discharged from 9 a.m. to midnight. Any other day of the year fireworks may be discharged from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. Local laws may further affect fireworks use.

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission data shows that in 2006, approximately 1,300 people were injured by fireworks. In addition, approximately 1,000 people were injured by sparklers and 800 by bottle rockets.

The IDHS Fire & Building Safety Division recommends Hoosiers check the fireworks they purchase to ensure they contain the following information:

- Class “C”
- Consumer Fireworks
- 1.4 g

“If you find a package that you cannot read because it is in a foreign language, it says Class ‘B’ fireworks, or 1.3 g, we strongly encourage you to call the CPSC hotline (800-638-2772),” Greeson added.

Facts (According NFPA statistics)

- Approximately 95-percent of all fireworks are produced in China.
- In 2006, 49% of emergency room fireworks-related injuries were to the extremities and 46% were to the head.
- 55% of the 2006 fireworks injuries were burns, while 30% were contusions and lacerations.
- One-third of the people injured by fireworks were under the age of 15.
- The risk of fireworks injury was two-and-a-half times as high for children ages 10-14 as for the general population.
- Sparklers, fountains, and novelties alone accounted for 28% of the emergency room fireworks injuries in 2006.

If you choose to use fireworks, the IDHS Fire & Building Safety Division suggests following these important safety tips:

Preparation

- Obey local laws, including ban of fireworks due to drought.
- Buy fireworks from a reliable, licensed dealer.
- Read and follow all directions.
- Do not alter any fireworks or attempt to make fireworks.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from the reach of children.
- Safety glasses are recommended for the person lighting or nearby the fireworks, such as a helper.

Location and Conditions

- Keep a fire extinguisher, water supply, hose or bucket of water nearby.
- Use fireworks outdoors, never indoors.
- Use in a clear, open area.
- Keep spectators a safe distance from the show.
- Be cautious of lighting any fireworks during strong wind conditions and light fireworks with prevailing wind blowing away from the spectators.

Fireworks Use

- Don't allow children to handle, play with, or light any fireworks.
- Designate one person to ignite fireworks.
- Light only one firework item at a time.
- Never attempt to re-light, alter or fix any fireworks.
- Never smoke when handling fireworks.
- Drinking alcohol and using fireworks do not mix.
- Never aim, point or throw fireworks at another person.

If you would like more information on fireworks or the IDHS Building Safety Division, please visit our website at: www.in.gov/dhs.

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Contact

John Erickson or Rachel Meyer, (317) 234-6713, pio@dhs.in.gov